

Overcoming the Side Effects of the Internet and Social Network at University

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Abstract— Over the last few decades, the internet and social network have shaken up the world and the way human beings interact with each other. Teachers and learners can't and shouldn't escape this race and ought to adapt itself to this reality in order to make the most of the endless and extraordinary possibilities that this tool actually offers to both students and lecturers. On the other hand, the damage that it is provoking to educational community is crystal-clear, since we are becoming less productive, waste more time than ever before, suffer from lack of concentration, and have serious difficulties in dealing with texts in depth. This research, therefore, will show evidences after surveying students at Khon Kaen University (Thailand) and it will lead us to establish guidelines and patterns with the clear purpose of having social media as our servant instead of as our master.

Keywords— Internet, Productivity, Social Network, University

I. INTRODUCTION

NEEDLESS to say, we waste our time daily with the internet, especially social network, much more than we should. Thus, when trying to be not only a successful student but also a lecturer, it's crucial to face this problem and find the ways to sort it out.

With this in mind, an initial study research has been made among students at Khon Kaen University in which there has been a determinant commitment to identify and state the different time stealers that are refraining people from being focused and therefore are leading them to be less productive and to obtain worse results in both academic and personal life [1].

Once identified the main time stealers, which are mainly, but not only, related to Social media such as Facebook, Line, Twitter, Instagram, some emails, etc., as well as, frequent interruptions, procrastination, unproductive and endless meetings, mindless TV watching, etc., next step consisted in setting up an effective plan to fight them by using proven techniques which have contributed to drive us to avoid wasting our time and therefore to be more successful in our life.

Since it's definitely desirable a society that grows not only financially but also, and mainly, intellectually, the objectives of this research are to raise awareness, at least within our

circle of influence, and to create a positive impact in the productivity and future success of university students from Thailand. That would be the reward, finding that all the endeavors are of use for someone.

II. METHODOLOGY

A. Sample

The population for this research has been undergraduates Thai students from the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences at Khon Kaen University.

B. Measures

The main survey has been done by asking 165 students about daily habits during their studying days, that is to say, Monday to Friday. Specifically, the question asked has been: How much time do you spend daily Monday to Friday at each of the following activities? There were five possible answers, which are: Do not spend time on this activity; less than 30 minutes; between 30 minutes and 1 hour; between 1 and 2 hours; more than 2 hours. Taking into account that range of answers, the activities and its importance is described as follows:

-Exercising

This item has been chosen because it is considered that it's highly important to dedicate between 30 minutes or 1 hour daily and it's of significance to know whether students spend time on this activity or not in order to encourage them to continue doing it or to make them understand the importance of being in a good shape because both their body and their mind will perform better and in the long term they will be able to do more mental and physical activities. But what's even more important, they will be healthier and therefore will be happier.

-Social Network (Facebook, Twitter, Line, etc.)

This is the most important item in the survey. It has been deliberately addressed on the third position and not in the first or last because it was important to make people answer without being aware that the whole survey revolves around this issue. It is considered that in doing so, students will be at ease and their answer would be more accurate.

As stated before, productivity and effectiveness is lowering down since people spend most of their free time Facebooking or instant messaging. It's an increasing concern that first

need to be addressed and properly explained so as to raise awareness and build strong systems which help everybody to avoid this sometimes damaging time stealer.

-Surfing the web

Not exactly the same than Social Network, but surfing the web represents also a big time stealer since we lose control and start jumping from one web to another, unconsciously clicking the links showed and in the process we tend to lose hours and hours without even noticing it [2]. It causes a lot of problems, among others: headaches, less sleeping hours or less social skills.

-Online games (Angry Bird, Candy Crush, etc.)

It is commonly accepted that this kind of entertainment represents a total waste of time. And according to the cyber psychologists Berni Good and Jamie Madigan, who run the web The Psychology of Video Games, we tend to get addicted to it. Here are some of the reasons they explain [3]:

These games are based around and extremely effective compulsion loop, with two main psychological motivations [4]:

- a) Pattern recognition: Our brains love to search for systems and sequences in the world around us; it is our primary method of reading our environment.
- b) Reinforcement: The idea that behaviors can be encouraged if a pleasurable stimulus is provided.

-Meditation

In a country where almost 95% of the population practices Buddhism, it is of use to know how often people meditate. The goal is to positively reinforce them for doing this activity or to encourage those who don't practice it to try it.

It is widely accepted that the benefits of mindfulness meditation are endless [5]. Here are some of them:

- a) Reduce stress: According to a research published last year in the journal Health Psychology, it is proven that it lowers stress since it's linked with decreased levels of the stress hormone cortisol.
- b) It helps us even when we are not actively practicing it: That's the finding of a study in the journal Frontier in Human Neuroscience which reveals that the amygdala brain region's response to emotional stimuli is changed by meditation.
- c) Improves quality of sleep: A University of Utah study found that mindfulness training can not only help us better control our emotions, but it can also help us sleep better at night.

-Reading books

As people who want to acquire more skills and become wiser, it is almost compulsory to read book after book. It has endless benefits [6]:

- a) Mental stimulation: Like any other muscle in our body, the brain requires exercise to keep it strong and healthy.

- b) Knowledge: The more knowledge we get, the better prepared we'll be to face any challenge.
- c) Vocabulary expansion: We'll become more creative and be able to speak and write with a wide range of words which will make our message richer.
- d) Improved focus and concentration: At some extent, reading is also a kind of meditation which will undoubtedly make us better at facing one task at a time.

-Watching TV

Needless to say, watching TV is one of the biggest time wasters and it is crucial to be concerned about it so as to limit our time doing it.

Unlike exercising, reading books or meditating, watching TV causes damage in our physical and mental health due to the sedentary lifestyle it represents.

-Listening to music

A relaxing and refueling activity that, when used appropriately, can make people more creative and better learners. Many studies have also shown that music improves concentration and attention.

-Going out with friends

It goes without saying that the more the people interact with others, the better social skills they'll develop. It is also necessary to spend time at leisure with people you enjoy your time so as to disconnect your mind from your daily duties.

-Face to face conversations

As technology continues to evolve, the different ways to communicate are endless: social media, email, Skype, mobile phone, etc. Due to that fact, it is now much more important than ever before to spend time in face to face conversations, otherwise our social abilities and capacity to meet new people will inevitably drop down [7]. It is also useful to avoiding misunderstandings and building stronger relationships.

In that sense, it is vital to encourage students to do it as much as they can and also to promote different activities such as debates and public speaking contests.

-Other activities not included before

In this item it will be included any activity that worth mentioning and has not been referenced above.

C.Procedure

The questionnaire has been sent to the students using the google drive tool during January, 2015.

III. RESULTS

As it was expected, results have shown that students spend too much time on unproductive activities which cause truly negative effects on their productivity. However, it is more truly positive to realize that several time stealers are appropriately avoided by students and therefore it is just necessary to use reinforcement and let them know that they must continue acting that way. These avoided activities are: online games and watching TV, where more than half of the

survey respondents assure that they do not spend time on.

This circumstance is what leads the study to focus only on the activities that are causing the biggest negative impact on their productivity which are: Social Network and Surfing the Internet.

Not in vain, the results of the survey after asking 165 people at Khon Kaen University show that 28% of the respondents (45 out of 165) spend between 1 and 2 hours on social media and 47% (80 out of 165) spend more than 2 hours daily on it. In regard to the other crucial item, surfing the web, the results say that 34% of the students surveyed (55 out of 165) spend between 1 and 2 hours surfing the web and 53% of them (85 out of 165) spend more than two hours daily on that activity.

IV. DISCUSSION

After analyzing the results, and in order to reach the main goal of the research, which is to overcome the side effects of the internet and social network at university, the guidelines and patterns to be followed are:

-Social Network [8]:

- a) Know your social media goals: Reflect on what you want to achieve by being on social media. Once you know it, you can start doing what it takes to reach your goal, and eliminate the rest.
- b) Have a strategy to reach your goals: Create a roadmap for how you'll reach your goals.
- c) Learn how to use social media properly
- d) Schedule updates: Logging into Facebook or Twitter every hour to share a post or a tweet is counter-productive and distracts you from real work or study. Instead, start using scheduling tools: Hootsuite or Buffer App are some of the most popular.
- e) Limit yourself to 20 minutes per network per day (1 hour maximum): If you want to regularly studying, working or just exercising, you don't need social take over your life. Limiting the time on it will allow you to successfully do all the other tasks that really matter.
- f) Take a digital detox: If all else doesn't work, then consider taking a digital detox. Set aside a week (or at least a couple of days) to not use social media at all.

-Surfing the web [9]:

- a) Unplug from the internet: If you really need to get work done without interruptions, do not hesitate, turn off the internet. You will avoid temptations and remain focused on your task.
- b) Never "just browse" to start: Studies show that many people have certain tendencies: just after school, right after work or coming home from dinner where they switch on their computers or smartphones and just

browse. Try hard to break that bad habit and always begin with a purpose or you'll find yourself mindlessly surfing the web.

- c) Set a timer: It's really useful to set a time limit on your web search, otherwise it's more than likely that you spend more time than you wanted.
- d) Save articles for later: Most of the times it's tempting to read related and linked articles when you are surfing the web. We should strongly avoid it by strength of will or with some app like Pocket if necessary.

V. CONCLUSION

To conclude, there is a strong conviction that by following these challenging while fascinating steps, not only students but also lecturers will get back their power as productive, efficient and focused people. A big challenge is going to be faced in the coming years so it's time to start working together to overcome it.

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